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## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

### GENERAL BOOKS AND BOOKS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

*The Processes of History.* By FREDERICK J. TEGGART, Associate Professor of History in the University of California. (New Haven: Yale University Press. London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. 1918. Pp. vii, 162. \$1.25.)

ACCORDING to Professor Teggart, the problem which should properly concern historians, at least in so far as they wish to be classed with scientific scholars, is the question of "*how man everywhere has come to be as he is*". Many historians would at once exclaim that this is precisely what they have been doing—explaining how man has come to be as he is. But no, Professor Teggart would answer, what you have been doing is to relate, mainly in narrative form, selected particular events in the history of certain groups of people—Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Chinese. This tells us what men have been and what they have done, but not how they have come to be as they are; it tells us the facts but not the processes of history. What we need to know are those events that are common to all peoples rather than those that are peculiar to certain peoples. Only by approaching the past in this way, by a comparative study of the history of all peoples, primitive as well as civilized, can we arrive at conclusions that will have a scientific validity.

This is, of course, an old question, and one that cannot be discussed in a brief page or two. Personally, I have no quarrel with this method of approaching the study of history. The life of man may be studied in many ways—the more the better; and I have read with pleasure and profit the compact and well-written little volume in which Professor Teggart, surveying mankind from China to Peru, draws from his observations (with the aid, it must be said, of a good deal of *a priori* reasoning) certain conclusions, comprehensive and general enough certainly, the validity of which it would doubtless be hazardous to deny—as, for example, that among primitive people migration is due to the reduction of the food supply, that the direction of migration is conditioned by the geographical factors, that "political" organization arises as the result of the conflict of groups for the possession of distinct territories, that the influence of group ideas and traditions tends towards fixity and stagnation, that the conflict of two groups with different group ideas and traditions tends towards change and modification, and so on. All this is suggestive; and, although one feels that with a different selection of facts it would be possible perhaps to reach different conclusions, the method, if persistently applied, is one which would doubtless lead to an

explanation of "how man everywhere has come to be as he is"—that is to say, it would explain the *universal processes* of historical change.

If, however, Professor Teggart maintains (as I am not sure that he does), that this is the only proper way to study history, then I do not agree with him. I do not think that it is even the most profitable way to study history, although I am quite ready to admit that it may be the only "scientific" way. We need to know more about man than the universal processes of his conduct, although we do not need to know more than that about the conduct of beetles, and the reason for that is that we are men and not beetles. Not being ourselves beetles, we cannot enter into the conduct of beetles with a sufficient degree of sympathetic understanding to make it worth while to chronicle the biography even of distinguished beetles, or of such groups of beetles as may have attained a high degree of advancement; but being men we can understand the conduct of men, not only through the abstract generalization of those impersonal forces that condition their conduct, but also through a knowledge of the concrete events of their lives and a sympathetic appreciation of the conscious motives and purposes that determined their action. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates is made to speak of the man who might try to show that I sit here because my body is made up of bones and muscles . . . and as the bones are lifted at the joints by the contraction or relaxation of the muscles, I am able to bend my limbs, and this is why I am sitting here in a curved posture; that is what he would say, and he . . . would assign ten thousand causes of the same sort, forgetting to mention the true cause, which is that the Athenians have thought fit to condemn me, and accordingly I have thought it better and more right to remain here and undergo my sentence.

Here are two radically different explanations of the conduct of Socrates —of how he came to be sitting in his cell. They are entirely incomensurable explanations, in no sort of conflict with each other, each being entirely adequate in its own field but altogether useless in the other: the one explanation has to do with those material forces which enable men everywhere to sit in a curved posture; the other has to do with the human motives which induced Socrates to remain in his cell. Might we not say that the one explanation is scientific and the other historical?

At all events, without quarrelling over the terms "historical" and "scientific", if Professor Teggart thinks we cannot fully understand how man everywhere (as, for example, in Europe at the present moment) has come to be as he is without determining the universal processes of history, I bid him God-speed in the search for those processes. But as for myself, I find the state of man as it now is in Europe intelligible, in so far as it can be made intelligible, chiefly through a study of the concrete doings and sayings of particular Europeans, more especially during the last hundred years or so; and in the endeavor to attain this kind of understanding, the sort of information which I find most useful is that

which reveals the conscious motives and purposes that appear to have had a determinative influence.

CARL BECKER.

*The History of Statistics, their Development and Progress in Many Countries.* Collected and edited by JOHN KOREN. (New York: Macmillan Company, for the American Statistical Association. 1918. Pp. xii, 773. \$7.50.)

THIS is a memorial volume issued to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the American Statistical Association. It opens, therefore, as might be expected, with a history of the association. This very brief narrative by John Koren is largely devoted to telling something of the men who have been prominent in the association and the conspicuous services rendered by each. In general outline, the chief activities of the association are also recorded. In the next chapter, Dr. S. N. D. North discusses the progress of statistics during the last seventy-five years and the outlook for the future. This very broad subject is necessarily covered in a most general way.

The remainder of the volume consists of a series of histories, for various leading countries of the world, of the advancement of each in knowledge of a statistical nature concerning itself. A prominent statistician of each nation, who is or has been closely identified with the statistical work thereof, describes the statistical progress in his own particular country from its earliest recorded beginnings down to the present time.

The extension to different fields of the collection of numerical data is usually traced in considerable detail. The studies are confined to the expansion of statistical information and deal to no noticeable degree with the development of or instruction in statistical method or theory. Although private statistical studies, especially those of early days, are treated to some extent, the great bulk of the space is devoted to the kinds of data collected by various governmental units.

While differing markedly in elaborateness and form, the histories are all written in scholarly and readable style. The history of federal statistics in the United States by Dr. John Cummings is especially to be commended because it gives an apparently well-balanced, critical appraisal of the value of leading types of statistical studies made by our government. In the opinion of the reviewer, the work of many of the other writers might have been made even more valuable to the readers had the authors followed a similar course.

In reading the various histories, one is impressed by the fact that extensiveness of statistical knowledge is largely coincident with progress in civilization and governmental efficiency. In Russia, the elaborateness of the plans made contrasted with the meagreness of the results actually obtained, also the extreme decentralization and incomparability of the